

Semipalmated Sandpiper and Western Sandpiper in Tamaulipas.—There being very few definite records of the Semipalmated Sandpiper (*Ereunetes pusillus*) for Mexico (see Friedmann, Griscom, Moore, Pacific Coast Avif., 29: 99, 1950, and Thompson, Wilson Bull., 70: 288, 1958), it seems advisable to call attention to an adult female specimen (bill 19.5 mm.) collected 31 July 1953, by R. R. Graber at Laguna Blanca, 11 miles southeast of Norias, on the Tamaulipas coast. The specimen (RRG 2419), which is now housed with my collection, appears to be largely in winter feather, the only obvious remnants of the breeding plumage being a few worn, blackish-brown scapulars and a scattering of dark, much-worn chest feathers.

The Western Sandpiper (*E. maurii*), which apparently has never been reported from Tamaulipas (see Friedmann, *et al.*, *op. cit.*), probably migrates regularly along the east coast of Mexico along with the Semipalmated Sandpiper. There are seven Tamaulipas specimens in my collection, all obtained by Helmuth O. Wagner, at Pesca, on January 14 (female) and 16 (four males, two females), 1948. The specimens are in full winter feather. The January 14 female (HOW 2135), whose culmen measures 30.0 mm., is the longest-billed Western Sandpiper I have ever handled. In the two January 16 females (HOW 2157, 2161) the culmen measures, respectively, 27.0 and 21.5. I thought for a time that the short-billed bird was a Semipalmated Sandpiper, but it is too slender billed and a little too pale throughout the upper parts for that species. There is a possibility that the specimen was incorrectly sexed, though Dr. Wagner's label-drawing clearly shows an organ about 1 mm. wide and 2.5 mm. long. The January 16 males (HOW 2159, 2160, 2162, 2163) have a bill length of 24.0, 23.0, 22.0, and 23.5, respectively.—GEORGE MIKSCHE SURTON, *Department of Zoology, University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma.*

Color of the Tarsi and Toes of the Black Rail.—Examination of two fresh specimens of the Black Rail (*Laterallus jamaicensis*) has prompted us to call attention to the color of the tarsi and toes of this species, since our observations do not agree with published accounts. Audubon (Ornithological Biography, vol. IV; 361, 1838) and Friedmann (Birds of North and Middle America, U.S. Nat'l. Mus. Bull., 50: 154, 1941) state that the tarsi and toes are bright yellowish-green. Descriptions in other publications are similar. Prominent bird artists, including Fuertes, have depicted the color of these appendages as yellowish-green, yellow, or green; while Allan Brooks' illustration of this species (The Book of Birds, vol. I, National Geographic Society, p. 291, 1932) shows pink legs.

An adult female specimen was collected by J. A. Hagar, C. S. Robbins, and R. E. Stewart near Elliott Island, Maryland, on 8 June 1958. A second adult Black Rail, presumed to be a female by its dull color and call, was caught alive by the authors in the same area on 17 June 1958, and is still held in captivity. The tarsi and toes of these two birds show no trace of yellow or green. They appear grayish, matching "Flint" (plate 56—1C) or "Gunmetal" (plate 48—2C) in Maerz and Paul's "A Dictionary of Color" (1930), and "blackish-brown" in the color charts provided with Palmer and Reilly's "A Concise Color Standard" (Am. Ornith. Union Handbook Fund, 1956). A grayed-off blackish-brown would seem to be an appropriate description.

Other supporting evidence was obtained concerning this matter. An adult male specimen in the U.S. National Museum, collected near Chincoteague, Virginia, on

12 June 1958, by C. O. Handley, Jr., was found to have tarsi and toes that were identical in color to those of the two females. Herbert L. Stoddard of Thomasville, Georgia, in recent correspondence reports that he has examined the tarsi and toes of four freshly killed male Black Rails, and that "all had legs practically the same color as those of the King and Virginia Rails; a dull chocolate blackish."

The existence of this discrepancy between the actual coloration of legs and toes of Black Rails recently examined, and the descriptions of these parts in the literature, was verified by Dr. Herbert Friedmann and Mr. Herbert G. Deignan of the U.S. National Museum, and Dr. John W. Aldrich and Mr. Thomas D. Burleigh of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Possibly, these recorded differences could be related to age or race. However, we are not aware of any concrete evidence that would support such a supposition.—BROOKE MEANLEY AND ROBERT E. STEWART, *Patuxent Research Refuge, Laurel, Maryland*.

The Basis of Color Dilution in an Albinistic Blue Jay.—In March 1955, an albinistic Blue Jay (*Cyanocitta cristata*) was collected near Milford, New York, by Mr. Chester Sweet. The bird was with a flock of jays when collected and appeared to be normal except for coloration.

Color was evident only in areas corresponding to those of heaviest pigmentation in the normal bird. Thus the hard parts, neck band, and parts of the wings and tail were the only parts of the aberrant bird that were at all strongly colored. The bill, feet, legs, the area around the eye, and the neck band, which are all black on normal jays, were brown on the light-colored one. Areas which are normally light-colored, such as the breast and throat, are even lighter on the aberrant one. The top of the head and the back, normally gray-blue or dusky blue, are dirty white in the albinistic specimen. The portions of the primaries, secondaries, and tail feathers, normally blue and black, are in the present specimen respectively very light blue and light brown.

The blue color of the Blue Jay is due to scattering of light through a modified layer of transparent cells in the barbs (the so-called box cells) containing gas-filled vacuoles, which lie above cells containing a brown melanin pigment (see Gower, 1936, and Frank, 1939). The question was whether the unusual coloration in this specimen was due to a deficiency of pigment, or to a structural abnormality in the blue-producing cells. Ten micron cross sections were made of the barbs in order to determine the cause. Basically the process of Gower (1936) was used, but the feathers were not bleached. They were imbedded in paraffin, then mounted in Canada balsam. Corresponding secondary wing feathers were selected because of their range of color. The sections showed the pigment to be greatly reduced in the feathers of the light-colored bird, as compared with the normal (Fig. 1). Although seen in only one feather, it was assumed that this difference would hold throughout the bird. No structural difference could be detected, but the box cell layer was very indistinct in both birds, the vacuoles not being visible at 970X.

According to the classification proposed by Pearson, Nettleship, and Usher (1911-1913), and used by Mueller and Hutt (1941), this bird is an imperfect albino, as there is a partial inhibition of pigment formation in the feathers. I have been unable to find other records of imperfect albinism in the Blue Jay or other blue birds.

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